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hen planning the adventure trip of a lifetime, the most important decision you'll make is not where to go, but who to go with. Think about the stakes: weeks of your time, thousands of your dollars, even, potentially, your own safety. If an outfitter fails to deliver on the dark side of the moon, you don't get a do-over. An expert tour company, on the other hand, can give you access to remote lands, introduce you to those who live there, and make sure you not only see the world, but

also experience it. Today there are outfitters running trips in just about every country on Earth. To help you pick the right one, we've conducted the world's first large-scale rating of adventure tour operators. It's extensive. It's user-friendly. ■ As part of the National Geographic Society, we have a unique take on travel. We appreciate fine meals and high thread counts, but we also want to know who's teaching their clients about the places they visit, who's pushing the frontiers of discovery and adventure, and who's giving back to the planet. So we surveyed over 200 outfitters and scored them on the criteria that matter to us most: education, sustainability, quality of service, and spirit of adventure. We evaluated gorilla-safari specialists and Grand Canyon rafters, Napa Valley cyclists and Himalaya trekkers. As expected, most of the top scorers excel in multiple areas. But we were pleasantly surprised to find that almost all of them consider their environmental impact a fundamental part of the trips they offer. ■ Every name that appears on the following pages qualifies as "best." It's up to you to decide which one is best for you.



Exploring Kenya's
Ol Kinyoi Conservancy with
Gamewatchers Safaris

HOW WE DID IT: *The Methodology*

With assistance from the Adventure Council, Adventures in Travel Expo, the Adventure Travel Trade Association, and other travel and tourism organizations, we reached out to hundreds of tour companies around the world. The outfitters were asked to complete a comprehensive 28-question survey and were scored from 1 to 100 in each of the following categories: education, sustainability, quality of service, and spirit of adventure. Researchers then contacted client references for every company and generated a fifth score, also between 1 and 100, based on their feedback. Each outfitter's overall score represents the average of these five scores. A team of ADVENTURE editors, travel writers, and experts vetted those with overall scores of 80 and above and, from this pool of candidates, chose the "Best Outfitters on Earth," 55 of which are profiled here (the rest are listed online; see box at right). The magazine selections are divided into the six major categories below.

DO-IT-ALL

Operate on multiple continents and offer a wide range of outdoor adventure activities

BIKING

Operate in multiple countries and specialize in road cycling and/or mountain biking

HIKING + TREKKING

Operate on multiple continents and specialize in trekking tours

RIVER + SEA

Operate on multiple continents and specialize in flat and whitewater paddling

SAFARI

Operate in one or more African countries and specialize in wildlife viewing excursions

LUXURY

Operate on multiple continents and deliver adventures with first-class services and amenities

BEST
{Outfitters}
ON
Earth

ON THE WEB

The ADVENTURE Ratings

The following 55 outfitters are just the beginning. ADVENTURE has built the ultimate online travel-planning tool—the first authoritative rating of great adventure tour operators on the Web.

✓ THE TOOLS:

- 160-plus outfitter profiles
- Expert reviews
- Trip photos and videos
- Editors' picks

✓ SEARCH BY:

- Activity
- Destination
- Price range

✓ SORT BY RATINGS CATEGORIES:

- Education
- Sustainability
- Quality of service
- Spirit of adventure
- References
- Best Overall

Find Your Next Adventure Now

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